UNITED NATIONS

General Assembly

FIFTY-FIRST SESSION

*Official Records*

FIFTH COMMITTEE
15th meeting
held on
Tuesday, 29 October 1996
at 3 p.m.
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 15th MEETING

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| Chairman: | Mr. SENGWE | (Zimbabwe) |
| later: | Mr. STEIN (Vice-Chairman) | (Germany) |
| later: | Mr. SENGWE (Chairman) | (Zimbabwe) |

Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions: Mr. MSELLE

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Distr. GENERAL
A/C.5/51/SR.15
27 August 1997
ENGLISH
ORIGINAL: SPANISH

96-81701 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 116: PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM 1996-1997 (continued)
(A/50/7/Add.16, A/51/7/Add.1; A/C.5/50/57 and Add.1)

1. Mr. MSHAMBA (United Republic of Tanzania) recalled that in its resolution 50/214, the General Assembly had decided that savings in the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1996-1997 would not affect the full implementation of mandated programmes and activities and had requested the Secretary-General, in making proposals for savings, to ensure the fair, equitable and non-selective treatment of all budget sections. Any unilateral measure taken to achieve the desired savings would be unacceptable if it did not respect that decision of Member States. The Tanzanian delegation endorsed the request of the Group of 77 and China that the Secretary-General should provide detailed information on the budgetary and programme impact of the proposed cuts and on the grounds for them, which he had not done in his report.

2. Another area of concern was the quality of programme presentation. The numbers in the Secretary-General's report showed little relation to the programme changes, since it was not clear how reductions would affect the implementation of mandated programmes and activities. Of even more serious concern was the fact that the Secretary-General found it difficult to understand what his mandate was.

3. It also was necessary fully to involve the intergovernmental machinery in programme review since such involvement had been very limited thus far. However, his delegation welcomed the action taken by some regional commissions which had made it possible to conclude the programme reviews which were required before the Secretary-General made any specific proposals.

4. The issue of the effect of efficiency measures seemed to bear little relation to the budget review. Indeed, it was common knowledge that efficiency measures took time in order to have any effect. His delegation was concerned that Member States had not been given adequate information on efficiency measures undertaken by the Secretary-General. On the issue of staff reductions, he noted that they had been achieved by means of attrition and buy-outs. There was no need for involuntary separation of staff in order to achieve the desired reduction of staff costs. Vacancies had an impact on the responsibilities and workload of the remaining staff, particularly given the objective of meeting the requirement that all mandated programmes and policies were fully implemented. Staff should be separated only for cause and only when posts had been abolished by the General Assembly.

5. Mr. NOUR (Egypt) endorsed the remarks of the Group of 77 and China. Those seeking to impose a ceiling on total expenses for the biennium and to make the activities of the United Nations fit within that limit were putting the cart before the horse. Efforts to reduce costs must be guided by the objective of ensuring the optimum use of resources without compromising the effectiveness of the United Nations. It was unacceptable to impose reductions on programmes and activities which had been adopted by consensus by the General Assembly.

6. The Secretary-General had made it clear that any new programme or activity adopted during the biennium would have to be financed with additional resources. If Member States did not provide the required resources, those programmes and activities would have to be deferred or eliminated. That was entirely acceptable, but must occur without prejudice to the other programmes and activities which had already been adopted. All cost-saving measures were welcome provided that they respected the provisions of the resolutions of the General Assembly. Unfortunately, the measures adopted and proposed by the Secretariat did not meet that criterion and had not been accurately explained or justified, which gave rise to serious concern.

7. Egypt awaited with interest the submission of the first budget performance report, in which it hoped the concerns of Member States would be reflected.

8. Mr. Stein (Germany) (Vice-Chairman) took the Chair.

AGENDA ITEM 118: PATTERN OF CONFERENCES (continued) (A/51/32, A/51/125, A/51/253, A/51/268 and A/51/337)

9. Mr. ZHANG Wanhai (China) underscored the importance of ensuring the effective utilization of conference services and endorsed the remarks made by the representative of Costa Rica on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. Every effort must be made to improve the utilization of conference-servicing resources; for some United Nations bodies the utilization factor had barely reached 30 per cent. It was worth noting that since the beginning of the fifty-first session, the General Assembly and its Main Committees had endeavoured to begin their meetings on time and that the Committee on Information and the Ad Hoc Committee on the Indian Ocean had decided to reduce the number of their meetings or shorten the duration of their sessions. Although that approach was welcome, his delegation hoped that those bodies would ensure that they were able fully to discharge their mandate.

10. In view of the high cost of publishing documents in the official languages, a reduction in the number of pages and enhanced control of documents would be a good way to ensure savings. It was to be hoped that all text processing units would be able to enhance their efficiency and achieve economies in the presentation of documents in new formats after securing new computer equipment and programmes in the coming 12 months. His delegation concurred with the proposal of the Committee on Conferences that the Secretariat should pursue its efforts with a view to improving the quality in the substance and presentation of documentation, applying new publishing techniques to enhance readability and reduce consumption of paper.

11. Efforts should be made to use the latest technology to enhance the level of text processing and the utilization of documents. The use of the optical disk system and the Internet might result in savings for the United Nations and its Member States, which should be able to access the optical disk and thus obtain all available documentation. China hoped that the Secretariat would provide further information to help missions understand how the United Nations World Wide Web server worked and, in particular, that it would take practical measures to facilitate access by developing countries to the optical disk system in all official languages.

12. Efforts should be made to improve the quality of interpretation and translation into all official languages. The Secretariat had endeavoured to upgrade the quality of translation, but it was not yet at a satisfactory level, one example being the translation into Chinese of the report of the Committee on Conferences. The Office of Conference and Support Services had made greater use of self-revision in order to achieve economies, but that should not compromise the quality of translation. The improvement of the quality of interpretation and translation depended, on the one hand, on the initiative and sense of responsibility of staff members and, on the other hand, on the tightening of rules to deal with errors and omissions in translation resulting from irresponsible work.

13. Mr. BOYNTON (United States of America) said that the draft revised calendar of conferences and meetings for 1997 could be adopted only if it did not entail additional expenses. All meetings scheduled during 1997 must be accommodated within the existing budget. A meeting might be added only if it was offset by the deletion of another equivalent meeting. The substantive committees should review their meeting requests so as to rationalize and streamline them to ensure more efficient use of scarce resources.

14. The efficient and effective use of conference services and documentation was very important if the United Nations was to perform its work efficiently and at the same time remain within the $2.608 billion budget for the biennium 1996-1997. In the context of United Nations reform, making better use of conference services took on added importance, and to that end technical innovation should be encouraged. For example, when the optical disk system became accessible through the Internet and electronic access to documents became the general practice, there ought to be a reduction in costs and improvements in the timeliness and quality of information provided. Eventually, electronic documents would by and large replace printed documents. In that connection, paragraph 79 of the report of the Committee on Conferences (A/51/32) called for a report on facilitating access by developing countries to the optical disk system, and paragraph 81 attested to the need for restricting access to certain documents.

15. The United Nations could take several measures to reduce or streamline the conference-servicing and documentation workload. For instance, intergovernmental bodies and Member States should prioritize and rationalize their requests, as indicated particularly in paragraphs 86 to 93 of document A/51/32. Limits were limits, and were not meant just for information purposes.

16. His delegation shared the views expressed by the President of the General Assembly, by the representative of Ireland on behalf of the European Union and other countries and by the representatives of Japan and the Russian Federation on the importance of starting meetings on time. Document A/51/32 set out clearly the enormous cost of inefficient use of conference-servicing resources.

17. Regarding the efforts to reduce documentation and biennialize or triennialize agenda items (A/51/32, para. 73), surely more than two bodies could comply with General Assembly resolution 50/206 C. The use of unedited transcripts rather than verbatim or summary records should also provide faster

and less costly documents, as demonstrated by the experience of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space.

18. All intergovernmental bodies must extensively review the documents they produced and question the need for each document and its relevance. His delegation welcomed the results of the experiment in using unedited transcripts in lieu of verbatim and/or summary records, for unedited transcripts could provide the necessary information without delay, thereby enhancing their usefulness. Full and complete use of the optical disk system should also reduce the length of printed documents; and while some progress had been made in shortening documents, much more should be done.

19. The United States regretted that the Joint Inspection Unit had not as called for in General Assembly resolution 50/206 C, provided the comprehensive survey of the role of publications played in implementing mandates of intergovernmental bodies and the extent to which recurrent publications could be made more cost-effective. That information could have been helpful to the Fifth Committee and the Committee on Conferences in their consideration of whether certain services and products could be more economically and efficiently provided through contractual services.

20. The decline in the overall utilization factor for conference-servicing resources was a matter of concern. The United States urged the General Assembly to require that if a committee fell below the established 80 per cent utilization benchmark figures in 1997, that committee's requested conference-servicing resources for the 1998-1999 biennium would automatically be reduced by the same percentage by which its utilization factor had been below 80 per cent.

21. The United States urged the General Assembly not to grant waivers to the rule that meetings were to be held at Headquarters unless the change in venue was demonstrably more cost-effective and efficient. If a location outside of Headquarters was considered, non-utilized or under-utilized United Nations facilities should be given priority. When the General Assembly granted waivers, it should act only on requests approved by the Committee on Conferences. In addition, intergovernmental bodies must rethink the number, duration, timing and location of their meetings and call only for the most necessary meetings at the most economical locations.

22. With regard to the cost-accounting system requested by the General Assembly in resolution 50/206 D, paragraph 1, the United States echoed the concern expressed in paragraphs 62 to 65 of the report of the Committee on Conferences (A/51/32) as well as in statements by the European Union and other countries and by Japan that the Secretariat had not devised such a system, which was crucial in knowing the budget impact of requests and decisions.

23. In terms of accounting for costs as well as instituting efficient and reliable control mechanisms, the United States proposed that the Fifth Committee should request the Committee on Conferences to consider the feasibility of recommending that the Fifth Committee approve a request that the General Assembly should require intergovernmental bodies to budget for conference services and then "procure" those services by charging them against those budgets. Such a system would ensure that intergovernmental bodies were aware of

the cost and extent of the conference services requested and used. Intergovernmental bodies would then have the responsibility and accountability for their use of conference services. That system could be instituted independently of the cost-accounting system.

24. The United States shared the concern expressed by various delegations that informal consultations had been taped without the knowledge or consent of the participants, and looked forward to the answers to the questions raised on that matter.

25. It bore repeating that the Fifth Committee must ensure that in 1997 only meetings that could be accommodated within existing resources, namely, within the $2.608 billion budget for the biennium 1996-1997, were held. Any meetings that could not be accommodated within existing resources must be deferred or cancelled. The Committee could not recommend to the General Assembly a calendar which proposed meetings that would require additional resources, because there were no additional resources. However, there were resources that were not currently being fully used. The statistics indicated that time, resources and facilities were wasted. The disappointing trend of a diminishing overall utilization factor for conference services must be reversed, and available resources must be used optimally. With new thinking, approaches, procedures and technology, conference services and documentation could be provided at less cost with the same or better quality.

26. It was regrettable that the Committee had been used as the forum for what the United States believed was an unfortunate and misplaced statement by one Member State voicing its displeasure with a Secretariat staff member. The United Nations could only function properly if its staff were willing and able to perform their duties independently and without fear of personal attack.

27. Lastly, General Assembly resolution 50/206 provided a good starting point for improving the effectiveness and efficiency of the delivery of conference services and documentation, which accounted for some 20 per cent of the United Nations budget. It was critical for the Secretariat and Member States to follow up on the many recommendations in resolution 50/206 in order both to effect overall efficiency savings and to release resources for priority programmes. The United States reserved the right to speak again on the agenda item under consideration and looked forward to participating actively in the informal consultations on that most important issue.

28. Mrs. PHAM THI NGA (Viet Nam) said that her delegation recognized the important role of conference services and their contribution to the work of the Organization. In the context of the report of the Committee on Conferences (A/51/32) and the reports of the Secretary-General (A/51/253 and A/51/268), her delegation was deeply concerned about the under-utilization of conference services. Both the Secretariat and Member States had a duty to correct that situation. Every effort must be made to announce cancellations of scheduled meetings in good time and to avoid delays. In addition, the Committee on Conferences should invite the chairmen of other bodies, especially those which often fell below the benchmark figure of 80 per cent utilization, to make the best use of the allocated services and ensure that all meetings started on time.

29. It was regrettable that only two bodies had taken action for the control and limitation of documentation. The Committee on Conferences should hold consultations with other United Nations bodies to find the reason for that. At the same time, it was gratifying that access to the optical disk system had been facilitated, and that UNDP was providing an Internet connection to all permanent and observer missions which requested that service. Training should be provided to missions to ensure a better utilization of those services.

30. Lastly, her delegation was of the view that Member States should help the Secretariat meet the budget requirements. The chairmen of the relevant bodies should consult with Member States on strict observance of the timelimit for speakers. A reduction of the length of statements to between 10 and 15 minutes would be a cost-saving measure. In that context, her delegation endorsed the proposal for the establishment of a conference services coordination mechanism between the Secretariat and Member States.

31. Mr. Sengwe (Zimbabwe) resumed the Chair.

32. Mr. ATIYANTO (Indonesia) said that his delegation fully associated itself with the statement made by Costa Rica on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. The growing number of issues considered by the General Assembly reflected the determination of the international community to seek the settlement of problems through constructive dialogue. It was therefore a source of deep concern that the continuing budget reductions made it very difficult for the Organization to implement its mandated programmes and activities effectively. The cost-saving measures in the programme budget for the biennium 1996-1997 had an adverse impact on the capacity of the Office of Conference and Support Services to carry out its mandated activities. It was ironic that, as demonstrated by statistical data, the actual utilization of conference services in 1995 had been below the benchmark figure of 80 per cent. The General Assembly had carefully considered that problem in recent years and had adopted many resolutions and decisions which must be fully implemented. His delegation felt that the Chairman of the Committee on Conferences should regularly consult the bureaux of all United Nations bodies with a view to improving the utilization of conference-servicing resources.

33. On the problem of documentation, the need to comply strictly with the limits established for documentation must be reaffirmed. In that respect, Indonesia strongly supported the recommendation of the Committee on Conferences that the Secretariat should be requested to pursue its efforts with a view to improving quality in the substance and presentation of documentation.

34. Lastly, on the issue of the allocation of conference services to meetings of regional groups and other major groupings of the Member States, his delegation stressed the importance of those groupings in the decision-making processes of the United Nations. The forging of common positions by groups of Member States could lead to savings rather than causing additional financial burdens. While his delegation recognized that bodies established under the Charter and mandated bodies must be serviced as a priority, it also considered that it was of great importance that adequate conference services should be provided to regional and other major groupings.

35. Mrs. ARAGON (Philippines) said that her delegation associated itself with the statement made by Costa Rica on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. Both the Secretariat and Member States must try to ensure that conference servicing resources, which were essential for the work of the Organization, were used in an efficient and cost-effective manner. Her delegation welcomed the efforts of the bureau of the General Assembly to ensure that meetings of the current session began on time, a practice which should be institutionalized.

36. With regard to the utilization of conference services, her delegation was pleased that the Chairman of the Committee on Conferences had held consultations with the chairmen of bodies whose utilization factors had consistently been below the benchmark figure.

37. Her delegation supported the recommendation of the Committee on Conferences that the dialogue between the Office of Conference and Support Services and the substantive secretariats of intergovernmental bodies should be a permanent coordination feature, not only at Headquarters but also at the United Nations Offices at Geneva and Vienna, where a need for improved coordination had been noted. It hoped, however, that such coordination would not entail additional costs.

38. Optimum utilization of conference services was a shared responsibility between the Secretariat and Member States. While Member States had to exercise restraint in their requests for reports, the Secretariat must ensure the timely and adequate provision of the necessary information. Her delegation therefore supported the recommendation of the Committee on Conferences that the Secretariat should be requested to pursue its efforts with a view to improving the quality and presentation of documentation.

39. While her delegation recognized that the Organization had limited resources for interpretation services, it found it regrettable that 35 per cent of the requests for those services from regional groups and other major groupings of Member States had not been granted. Better planning of meetings would ensure the more efficient use of conference services.

40. With regard to the optical disk system, although it would achieve savings in the Secretariat, due consideration must be given to the additional burden of access to the system and reproduction of documents for many developing countries. In that regard, her delegation supported the recommendations of the Committee on Conferences that the use of such technologies as the optical disk system and the Internet should not constitute an alternative to traditional documents and that the Secretariat should be requested to provide proposals in accordance with paragraph 3 of General Assembly resolution 50/206 D on facilitating access by developing countries to the optical disk system in all official languages.

41. Lastly, her delegation found it disturbing that the Secretariat had recorded informal consultations of an intergovernmental body without its knowledge or approval. That practice must be discontinued, since it did not provide a conducive environment for delegations to arrive at decisions by consensus on complex, often politically sensitive issues.

42. Mrs. MONTAÑA (Bolivia) said that the Secretariat should respond to the questions asked earlier by Bolivia on behalf of the Rio Group, especially those concerning the recording of informal meetings, before the Committee concluded its consideration of item 118.

43. Mr. HO TONG YEN (Singapore), speaking in exercise of the right of reply to the statement made by the United States, said that Singapore had made public the problems which had occurred at the expert group meeting on violence against women migrant workers in Manila and had named the senior Secretariat official involved because it believed that Secretariat officials had a responsibility to provide sound guidance on the rules and procedures for conducting United Nations meetings. Such officials should not be allowed to brush aside with untruths the legitimate concerns of Member States; mistakes should not be covered up but brought out into the open, and blanket accusations should not be made against the Secretariat or the Secretary-General when the problem lay with only one staff member and could easily be corrected.

44. Since the matter was a procedural one, Singapore had decided to raise it in the Fifth Committee, and the item "Pattern of conferences" seemed the most appropriate heading. It had referred in another forum to the substantive issues contained in the report on violence against women migrant workers.

45. It was surprising that the United States, dedicated as it was to increasing the accountability and competence of the Secretariat, should have expressed discomfort with Singapore's statement. After all, on another occasion the United States had criticized by name a senior member of the Secretariat and had called explicitly for his removal. Singapore's concerns were legitimate and its intentions noble, just as noble as the intentions of those who believed that attacking the Secretary-General would help to improve the Organization's efficiency.

AGENDA ITEM 112: REVIEW OF THE EFFICIENCY OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE AND FINANCIAL FUNCTIONING OF THE UNITED NATIONS (continued) (A/49/98 and Corr.1 (English only) and Add.1 and 2, A/49/418, A/49/471 and Corr.1, A/49/560, A/49/633, A/50/507 and Add.1, A/50/753, A/51/16 (Parts I and II), A/51/124-E/1996/44 and A/51/128 and Add.1)

46. Mr. KAMAL (Pakistan) said that the evaluation of the efficiency and performance of the United Nations presupposed a clear identification of the Organization's broad objectives. Those objectives, enunciated in the Charter, had to be reappraised in a political, social and economic situation which had undergone great change since the time of the drafting of the Charter. Ultimately the United Nations had to try to satisfy the aspirations of the peoples of the world. The extraordinary growth of civil society, the extraordinary power of private business, and the development of information technology had prompted the emergence of new actors who had altered the world scene. Similarly, with the ending of the cold war, many tensions had boiled over into open ethnic conflicts which had obliged the actors to seek refuge in isolaticnism and protectionism. The United Nations had to come to terms with all those changes and then define its management in the light of new objectives and direct its resources to the attainment of those objectives.

47. Human resources were a vital element. The moral of staff in the United Nations bureaucracy was low, its attitude blasé, and its output below par. Outside the Organization, without the protection of administrative tribunals and permanent contracts, most of the members of the bureaucracy would not survive. Specifically, administrative expenditure in the Secretariat was too high in relation to expenditure on programme implementation. In addition, the personnel structure, which ought to be pyramid-shaped, was based on an inverted logic. Lastly, the vacancy rates in the manning table did not properly reflect the interests of Member States or the economic and social objectives of the United Nations.

48. Sooner or later the problem of permanent contracts would have to be tackled, for they had impaired the Secretariat's performance, putting a premium on mediocrity and hardly ever providing any independence from the national pressures which were their ostensible justification.

49. The tendency to employ "loaned personnel" in vital areas of United Nations activity, which had been initiated under the excuse of the Organization's financial problems, had given such personnel, provided by a few developed nations, control over policy and decision-making in some key departments. In the Department of Peacekeeping Operations 83 per cent of the military officers were "loaned"; in its Field Administration and Logistics Division the figure was 100 per cent. Pakistan had been trying to determine the effects of that recruitment policy, the performance and capabilities of such staff members and their appraisal, the costs which they entailed despite their "free-of-cost" status, and their impact on the equitable geographical distribution of posts. Unable to obtain any information in the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations, it had had to raise the matter in the Fifth Committee and would do so at a plenary meeting of the General Assembly if necessary.

50. With regard to interpretation services, it must be asked whether the interpreters, who stopped working promptly at 1 p.m. and 6 p.m. and even deserted important meetings of the Organization at those times, were the only ones who worked or got tired in the Secretariat or in Member States. The deeper substance of the issue must be explored.

51. A large part of the current financial crisis was due to the inordinate sums which a few Member States owed the Organization. One of the anomalies created by that situation was that the United Nations owed huge arrears to Member States participating in peacekeeping operations, such as Pakistan, today the largest contributor to such operations (about 20,000 troops) and a developing country to which the United Nations owed over $70 million.

52. Finally, it was discouraging that for so long the senior officials and other authorities of the Secretariat had remained indifferent to technological innovations or had been reluctant to adjust to them. Much higher priority should be given to the adoption of measures in that area some of which had already been identified by the Efficiency Board. The ways in which the Organization could benefit from such innovations were innumerable, but a new culture would have to be established. Pakistan believed that such a new culture would in the end take root, because many of the younger staff members of the

Organization were much more aware than their superiors of the dynamic power of the technological revolution.

53. Mr. HANSON (Canada), speaking on behalf of Australia, New Zealand and Canada, said that the financial situation of the United Nations had been precarious for most of its existence but the latest crisis was different in that a major contributor, although having the capacity to pay, made the full payment of its assessed contributions subject to specific conditions, thus putting undue pressure on the Organization. That was not only unacceptable but also damaging to the reform process.

54. His delegation welcomed the Secretary-General's initiative in establishing an Efficiency Board and encouraged him to pursue the project, which should help to streamline the Organization and increase its efficiency. Reform was less about cost-cutting than about achieving more effective delivery of programmes; the Canadian delegation invited the Secretary-General to keep the Committee informed about the Board's work.

55. While the Secretary-General had full authority to take management decisions concerning, for example, the vacancy rate, the General Assembly was the place where difficult decisions on programmes, priorities and even the structure, mandates and continuation of certain United Nations bodies were taken. At the fifty-first session delegations should work hard to identify inefficiencies and overlaps and not be afraid to impose reductions, especially in sectors where the need to do so had been pointed out on more than one occasion.

56. Performance reporting could and should be improved. There was a need for better linkage between programme objectives and results and for developing performance indicators that measured achievement and reflected productivity, and did not merely describe the status of the activities performed. Moreover, he was concerned about the sharp decrease in the implementation rate of high-priority programmes and subprogrammes. Although he appreciated the limitations of that rate as an indicator of performance, inadequately explained departures from mandated programme activities, especially high-priority ones, were problematic. It was worth recalling that changes and additions to programmes must be approved by the competent intergovernmental bodies and that new mandates were subject to the preparation of programme budget implication statements.

57. In its report entitled "Management in the United Nations: work in progress", JIU had made two recommendations addressed to the Fifth Committee. He fully agreed with the first recommendation, asking for a series of measures to make Secretariat management and performance reporting more understandable. JIU had also recommended that future Secretariat work plans should include specific objectives together with completion dates. He fully concurred with that recommendation, which would improve accountability and performance reporting if implemented.

58. However, with regard to the second recommendation to establish small subcommittees of the Fifth Committee, he noted that the General Assembly already had at its service the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ), which studied specific issues in more depth. Nevertheless,

he was concerned about its heavy workload, and the limits on its capacity to deal with all the available information. Perhaps an extension of its calendar would enable the Advisory Committee to complete its programme of work. It might also consider the possibility of forming subcommittees or working groups to study time-consuming and specialized issues such as peacekeeping.

59. The Joint Inspection Unit had concurrently produced a report entitled "Accountability, management improvement and oversight in the United Nations system", which offered a comprehensive overview of the situation and contained good reference information. JIU itself referred to it as an initial baseline survey and as a summary of conceptual and practical relationships, patterns, common trends, initiatives and possible actions. Although he agreed with the main thrust of the report's recommendations, he found them to be too general in nature to be effectively implemented, which was not surprising in view of the objectives of the report. It would be preferable to have fewer of such reports and more in-depth audits and evaluations containing practical recommendations that would result in savings and/or better efficiency and programme delivery.

60. There seemed to be general agreement, with which he concurred, that the Board of Auditors was functioning well. However, he wished to reiterate his support for the Board's proposal that members' terms of office should be lengthened to six years so as to equal three budget periods. That change would not only permit individual auditors to acquire a better knowledge of the entities being audited, but would also provide for a smoother rotation of Board members. The Board should also be encouraged to do more value-for-money auditing, a measure which was especially needed in a period of budgetary constraint to help uncover waste and inefficiencies so as to make the best use of the Organization's resources. In order to maximize the potential of the oversight bodies, there was a need to ensure a better follow-up of their recommendations. Management's response to the recommendations should be included in the different reports, and management should submit comments on those recommendations and identify the measures taken or proposed, including implementation timetables.

61. The subsidiary bodies responsible for coordination, administrative questions and budgetary matters should be consolidated with a view to reducing duplication of effort and administrative costs. There might be a case for merging the mandates of JIU and the Board of Auditors to produce one external audit body with system-wide competence. Furthermore, the functions of the Committee for Programme and Coordination (CPC) could be redistributed to the Fifth Committee and to the Economic and Social Council, as had already been done in part.

62. The JIU reports were overly long and contained relatively few recommendations and some unsupported assertions. In addition, the recommendations often called for more resources without clearly demonstrating the benefits of such investments. The United Nations was under pressure to reduce its costs while improving its efficiency, and any new management initiative should therefore at least hold out the prospect of commensurate savings.

63. If JIU was to be retained, it would need serious reform. A comprehensive review should be made that would include, among others, examination of alternative formulas for funding the Unit. In the meantime, the process of election of inspectors should be improved. He welcomed the Secretary-General's proposal, which emphasized competence, experience and diversity of expertise as well as regional representation of inspectors. The General Assembly and the relevant intergovernmental bodies should have a greater role in the elaboration of the JIU work programme.

64. As for CPC, if its functions were not redistributed, changes should be made to the length of its sessions. A shorter, more focused calendar of meetings would achieve the same if not better results. Many of the Committee's functions duplicated those of the Fifth Committee and the Economic and Social Council without offering any distinct, substantive and cost-effective benefits. In view of the budgetary constraints experienced by the Organization, it was time to consider whether there was still sufficient need for CPC to justify its retention.

65. With respect to the report of the Ad Hoc Intergovernmental Group of Experts on jurisdictional and procedural mechanisms, he supported its recommendations and felt there was no need to establish a new body. However, all cases of presumptive fraud and fraud should be taken seriously, and proper mechanisms and enforcement measures should be in place, through the utilization of existing provisions, revision of rules and instructions and establishment of additional rules for high-risk temporary peacekeeping missions. The strengthening of oversight functions would also contribute to the deterrence of fraud. He was pleased to learn that a code of conduct was being prepared, although much remained to be done if the goal was to reinforce the confidence of Member States and the public in the United Nations.

AGENDA ITEM 136: FINANCING OF THE UNITED NATIONS ASSISTANCE MISSION FOR RWANDA (continued) (A/50/712/Add.1-3 and A/51/474)

66. Mr. MAZEMO (Zimbabwe), reporting orally on the results of the informal consultations held the day before on agenda item 136, recalled that the actions to be taken by the General Assembly were, first, a decision to extend the financial period from 10 June to 8 December 1995, for which an amount had previously been assessed, to include the period through 31 December 1995, and second, a decision regarding the unencumbered balance remaining from the amount assessed for that period. Since the first decision referred to the prior financial period and the second was clearly linked to the future consideration of the financing of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, the Committee had deemed it fit to defer action on the item until it had received the requested information concerning the financial requirements of the Tribunal. The Secretariat had assured the Committee that such deferral would in no way prejudice the operations of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda (UNAMIR).

67. The report on the financial requirements of the Tribunal was due to be issued on 1 November. He therefore recommended that the Committee should suspend consideration of the item until it could take a decision on the basis of the information to be received. In the meantime, the Committee was waiting for

the Secretariat to submit the information requested by India on the preliminary estimates of the amounts owing to troop-contributing countries and on the status of some unliquidated obligations. Similarly, Canada had requested information on death and disability claims and Uganda had requested information about the financial requirements of the Tribunal.

68. Mr. TAKASU (Controller) said that some of the information requested had already been provided during the informal consultations, but five tables had also been prepared in response to the questions mentioned. Table I related to preliminary estimates of amounts due to troop-contributing countries for contingent-owned equipment and troop costs. The estimates for contingent-owned equipment amounted to $31.1 million, but that amount could not be paid immediately, because it had to receive prior certification. As of 24 October, troop costs had amounted to $6.6 million, so that the United Nations owed troop-contributing countries a total of $37.6 million.

69. Table II provided a breakdown of the status of unliquidated UNAMIR obligations, which amounted to about $75.2 million.

70. Table III provided figures concerning the authorized and actual deployment of civilian personnel for the period ending with the liquidation of the mission. There were some variations between the estimates of the civilian personnel required to liquidate the mission and the personnel actually deployed. Those variations had resulted from the number of people actually required to complete the task. Furthermore, it had originally been hoped that the mission personnel responsible for liquidation would leave the area by the end of 1996, but there had been a delay of approximately one month.

71. Table IV provided information on the status of death and disability claims. Out of the approximately 60 cases of death and injury reported, 7 claims had been received; four of them had been paid and three were being processed.

72. Table V showed that the unencumbered balance amounted to approximately $21.4 million. Of the credit returned to Member States to date, about $21.2 million had been transferred to the special account for the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, in accordance with the relevant decision of the General Assembly.

73. The balance of the UNAMIR special account currently amounted to $63 million. That account would be used to pay the sums owing to commercial vendors and those owing under letters of assist and other claims and to pay troop costs and contingent-owned equipment costs following the necessary certification.

74. Contributions still to be paid by Member States amounted to some $30 million, meaning that when all Member States had paid their contributions to the UNAMIR account, the available balance would be $93 million. That would be used first of all to meet unliquidated obligations, which amounted to $75 million, including contingent-owned equipment costs and troop costs.

75. With regard to the questions put by Egypt, India and Malaysia concerning the amount the United Nations owed to countries that had contributed troops to

the United Nations Operation in Somalia (UNOSOM), a table had been prepared containing estimates of the amounts owing to Member States under the following headings: troop costs, $45.5 million; contingent-owned equipment, $121.9 million; letters of assist, $93.7 million; and death and disability claims, $7.4 million. The total was $268 million. That was a substantial amount and he understood how difficult it was for the countries concerned to wait for those costs to be reimbursed. However, payments to troop-contributing countries, like payments to suppliers, were made from the UNOSOM special account. Payments for troop costs, contingent-owned equipment and other costs depended upon the availability of cash in each peacekeeping operation account.

76. The UNOSOM special account was currently in deficit, because Member States owed substantial sums to it. They currently owed over $312.5 million, more than the amount which the United Nations owed to troop-contributing countries. Two major contributors accounted for more than 81 per cent of that debt. The Secretariat, including the Controller himself, had made a series of formal and informal contacts, at all levels, with representatives of the countries concerned. Moreover, a monthly status report on outstanding contributions was published every month in documents available to Member States. The Secretariat hoped that at the end of 1996 the Member States with large outstanding assessments would pay a portion of their arrears. When they did so, maximum use would be made of those resources to pay troop-contributing countries.

77. Some delegations had raised questions concerning the so-called strategic database of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, and had expressed the intention of proposing that the Secretariat should make available on a constant basis the amounts owing to troop-contributing countries. Some delegations had proposed that the scope and use of the database should be expanded. He explained that the strategic database operated with the assistance of experts whom some Governments had made available to the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and that the database was intended for internal and operational use by that Department. More importantly, the financial information it contained was intended for a variety of limited purposes. It was not the official database of the Organization, which had the Integrated Management Information System and other databases. It would therefore be advisable to use official figures in order to avoid any misunderstanding.

78. The CHAIRMAN said that, if there were no comments on the statement by the Controller, he would take it that the Committee accepted the proposal of the representative of Zimbabwe that the item on UNAMIR should remain open until the requested information was received, and decided to suspend consideration of the item for the time being.

79. It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 5.30 p.m.